

VZCZCXRO5872
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK RUEHROV
DE RUEHMS #0129 0431325
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 121325Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9266
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0521
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0412
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

UNCLAS MUSCAT 000129

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STATE FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/PPD, NEA/PI, AND INR/R/MR
STATE PASS USTR FOR N. MOORJANI, J. BUNTIN
LONDON FOR TSOU
PARIS FOR ZEYA
USCENTCOM FOR PLUSH
FOREIGN PRESS CENTER FOR SILAS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KPAO](#) [KMDR](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: ISRAELI BLOCKADE OF GAZA

¶1. SUMMARY: The editorials in private Arabic daily "Al-Watan" and government-owned "Oman" commented on the need to save Palestinians from Israeli attacks on the basis of moral and legal concerns and human rights. END SUMMARY.

MORAL AND LEGAL COLLAPSE

¶2. On February 7, state-owned Arabic daily "Oman" (circulation 38,000) described Palestinian suffering caused by the Israeli blockade and called on the U.N. and the international community to protest these human rights violations in an editorial, "Israeli Attack and the Silence of the International Community":

"Israel is continuing its barbaric attack against the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank while the international community stands and watches. It is as if the whole world is sending Israel the message that it can do what it wants without interference. This is a moral and legal collapse of the international community which otherwise sings about human and civilian rights. The majority of victims in this war are civilians - children, elderly people, and women. The United Nations does nothing to rescue Palestinians in the face of Israel's crimes, deliberate massacres, theft of water, destruction of farms, and assassinations. Israel is taking advantage of American bias and the division among Arabs to implement its criminal plans."

A RETURN TO COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT

¶3. The privately owned Arabic daily "Al-Watan" (circulation 42,000) wrote on February 7 that Israel is using HAMAS as a pretext for launching illegal attacks against civilians, calling it "A True Test for Israel":

"Israel continues to call for a strict blockade around Gaza under the pretext of ceasing the so-called 'rocket war'. It claims that there is a war taking place against Hamas, and that this war must incorporate economic pressure as a weapon. The Israeli President, the butcher Shimon Perez, suggests that there is no such thing as a small or big operation, but only convenient or inconvenient ones. These operations are supported by the international community, which has adopted Israel's line of self-protection. The international community is silent about what is going on in Palestine, and it is turning a blind eye to the Israeli attacks. Israel will return to its policy of collective punishment, using Hamas as an excuse to

subject civilians in Gaza to Israeli humiliation forever. Israel is diverting people's attention away from the core Palestinian issues to spoil peace efforts."

GRAPPO